



Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)

Statement

26th International Migrants Day

“Promoting Safety, Decent Work and Social Assistance to Migrant Workers

With support from the ILO-Ship to Shore Rights South East Asia program and IOM Cambodia, CENTRAL’s volunteer Safe Migration Ambassadors (SMAs) and local authorities are organizing the 26th International Migrants Day celebration under the theme “Promoting Safety, Decent Work, and Social Assistance for Migrant Workers” on December 18, 2025. Taking place at pagodas, communities, displacement camps and communes in several provinces, this event will involve former migrant workers, citizens, and youth to raise awareness about safety, risk prevention, and protection measures to prevent unsafe migration during border conflict.

In conjunction with International Migrants Day, CENTRAL would like to present the findings of our recent survey, conducted from August – October 2025, which highlights the economic pressures facing returned Cambodian migrant workers and the urgent support they need. *Mr. Moeun Tola, Executive Director of CENTRAL:* “Many workers returned at their own expense and received little assistance, while debt continues to shape decisions to re-migrate. Respondents are calling for decent jobs, temporary loan relief, food support, and better access to social protection to support safe reintegration.”

The key findings of the impact assessment report show that:

- Only 31% received any assistance, primarily from the Cambodian government
- Average return costs: US\$74 transport, US\$145 food, US\$56 unofficial payments (converted from Thai Baht)
- 71% of returnees are in debt; 85% of them cannot keep up with repayments
- Debt ranges from US\$30.80–US\$35,000 (average US\$5,500); average monthly repayment is US\$220
- 53% plan to migrate again; of these, 78% intend to return to Thailand

The returned migrant workers we surveyed are calling for:

- Stable, decent employment, including for workers over 40
- Start-up capital for small businesses
- Increase rice purchase prices and fair market access to support local agricultural enterprise

- At least a 6-month suspension of loan repayments
- Expanded access to NSSF, IDPoor, and food assistance during reintegration

On International Migrants Day, CENTRAL calls for strengthened collaboration to translate these findings into concrete support for returned migrant workers during this time of urgent need. The full report will be released in the coming weeks.

For more information, please contact

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